



Housing Supply, Property Issues Highlighted in SDAR REALTOR® Hosted Debates for CA-50 and San Diego Mayor

Candidates in each race debated hot topics including Measure A, housing supply and rent control.

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SAN DIEGO (February 19, 2020) — The Greater San Diego Association of REALTORS® (SDAR) and San Diego MLS hosted back-to-back candidate debates on Friday, February 14, for California’s 50th Congressional District and City of San Diego Mayor. Matthew T. Hall, editorial and opinion director at The San Diego Union-Tribune and president-elect of the national board of the Society of Professional Journalists, moderated both debates in front of a packed room of more than 300 people at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel in Hazard Center in Mission Valley.

With the March 3 primary election less than three weeks away, candidates in these high-profile races discussed issues most important to our region including the housing supply, rent control and homelessness. The debates, livestreamed on Facebook SDAR, are available to view at <https://www.facebook.com/RealtorsSD/videos/190423372199377/>.

“The Greater San Diego Association of REALTORS® (SDAR) and SDMLS are proud to have supported this dialogue on the most important issues to our region, including housing and other property issues that are relevant to our members,” said SDAR president Carla Farley. “These debates provided a forum for the candidates in key races to discuss their perspectives with our members. As can be seen by the turnout of more than 300 attendees, this event was a success and an important opportunity for our community to learn more about our future leaders.”



Six candidates for California’s 50th Congressional District participated in a debate hosted February 14 by the Greater San Diego Association of REALTORS® (SDAR) and San Diego MLS

The first debate featured 50th Congressional District candidates Ammar Campa-Najjar (D), business owner/educator; Carl DeMaio (R), taxpayer advocate/businessman; Helen Horvath (NPP), organizational development consultant; Darrell Issa (R), retired Congressman; Brian Jones (R), State Senator/business owner; and Henry Alan Ota (NPP), loan officer/farmer. The hot topics of discussion included affordable housing, homelessness, and Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

The moderator, Hall, opened the debate with the question, “What would you do to make housing more affordable for the residents of your district, and be specific?” Ota described his plan for a Universal Civilian Service Agreement, while Jones blamed state and local regulations and taxes and Issa claimed the problem is with the state government. Horvath presented her approach to addressing low-income housing affordability with grants, and Campa-Najjar discussed cutting red tape.

DeMaio responded, “We're going to fight Prop. 13's repeal, the split roll initiative, in November because, don't make any mistake about it, they're not going to end with the industrial commercial properties -- they're coming after single-family residential. I'm going to fight to make sure that our gas tax money is actually going to the infrastructure to support housing projects. I'm going to look at the effort as I'm doing right now against restrictive mandates being imposed at the ballot box, by defeating Measure A on this year's ballot.”

Hall later asked participants about how they would have voted on the State and Local Tax (SALT) deduction cap, now at \$10,000 for both single filers and married couples filing jointly, and whether it should be changed.

“We will repeal that exemption or the limits on the SALT tax deductions because it helps people in our district, in our county, in our state, and there's no wrong answer on this. It's the right thing to do,” said Campa-Najjar.

Issa, who voted against the bill when he was serving in Congress, said, “When I looked at that specific bill, there were good things in it, lots of good things in it, and I'm glad it passed in that sense. But ultimately, it was an unconstitutional principle. Taxes taken by the state are taken first. And when they're gone, you cannot count that revenue a second time. That principle, not just the dollars, but the principle was critical.”

Later, when asked about how they planned to boost jobs in the district, Jones responded, “I believe that small businesses are the key linchpin to our economy in California, and most of you are small businesses. And one of the things that we need to do is to help you succeed by getting the government out of your way in the lending principles of the real estate economy, getting the government out of the way of building in the real estate economy, getting government to approve projects faster, so you can get your stuff built faster and sold faster and get the return on your investments faster.”

When it came time to weigh in on which infrastructure issues were the most pressing in the 50th Congressional District, roads and freeways were a common theme among all respondents except Ota, who listed sewage coming from Mexico as a regional concern.

After the Congressional candidate debate, the City of San Diego's nonpartisan Mayoral candidates Gita Appelbaum, family nurse practitioner; Barbara Bry, City Councilmember/businesswoman; Todd Gloria, Assemblymember; Rich Riel, computer tech; Scott Sherman, City Councilmember; and Tasha Williamson,

nonprofit executive, took the stage in the second debate on issues surrounding middle-income housing, law enforcement's role in homelessness, rent control and Measure A.

Hall asked the candidates about what they would do beyond attempting to build more units to make homes and apartments more affordable. Gloria said, "I think that what we can do is legislation I've done at the state level, is to go from a per-unit basis of assessing the fees to a square-footage basis. I think that would incentivize the construction of more homes that are smaller. It doesn't de-incentivize the per unit of getting more density in these communities where we need them specifically near transit and jobs."



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When asked about whether they supported rent control, a rent cap or any form of government regulation to curb high rents, Bry replied, "I do not support rent control. As a businesswoman, I know it simply doesn't work. It doesn't create one new unit of housing. In fact, it may stymie new construction. It creates an insidious system in which there's a black market."

Hall then brought up the controversial Measure A, a ballot measure that would require an election to approve housing developments of six or more units in parts of San Diego County. Bry was undecided while Gloria declared he opposes Measure A. Sherman weighed in, saying he was absolutely against the measure, and added, "We have a housing crisis. We have a housing affordability crisis. And if you really want to put anything with six units or more in front of the voters to be approved, that's just going to increase the cost even more. It doesn't make any sense to me. It's just going to increase costs on housing."

The Mayoral debate wrapped up with a similar question as was brought to the Congressional candidates, asking about the most pressing infrastructure issue facing the City. Roads, once again, was the top answer along with water and sewer related infrastructure.

SDAR and SDMLS co-hosted the political debates since housing is such a central political issue in Southern California and a hot topic in both races. On the morning of the debates, SDAR hosted their New Laws & Industry Outlook for REALTORS® from across San Diego County.

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